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Linda McCulloch
Superintendent

DATE: October 18, 2004

SUBJECT: Guidance for Determining Categorical Eligibility for Free Meal Benefits for Children Served under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act

TO: School Food Authority (SFA Administrators)

FROM: Christine Emerson, Director
School Nutrition Programs

Runaway youth served through grant programs established under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) are categorically eligible for free meals in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

Background on the grant programs established under the RHYA

The Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) is part of the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF) of the Department of Health and Human Services. FYSB supports local communities in providing services and opportunities to young people, particularly runaway and homeless youth. The 2003 Reauthorization of the RHYA directed FYSB to coordinate with school district liaisons to assure that runaway and homeless youth (RHY) receive support services.

FYSB works through ten ACYF regional offices located throughout the country. Each regional office has a Regional Youth Specialist (RYS) to serve the states, territories, tribes and other grantees in their geographical area.

Documenting Eligibility

FYSB is developing an informational memorandum for their grantees that offers suggestions on how to build stronger relationships with school district liaisons. In many cases, the liaison is already working with youth receiving services under the RHY grant programs and school districts are notified of a child's status as a runaway through the existing liaison channels. In some cases, schools may receive information on a youth's participation in an RHY program directly from the RHY service provider. Documentation to substantiate free meal eligibility must consist of the youth's name, or a list of names, effective date, and the signature of the school district liaison or the RHY service provider. This documentation is acceptable in lieu of a free and reduced-price meal application.

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It is important that schools become familiar with their local RHY service providers and their school district liaison in order to ensure free school meal benefits for youth in these programs. If you have questions regarding the operation of FYSB, please contact your RYS. The website for the regional offices is www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/oro/. For further information on FYSB, you may want to view their website at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/index.html.

If you have questions, please contact Holly Humphrey, School Nutrition Programs Specialist, (406) 444-4413.